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The author suggests that higher education become a service for students, not an obstacle course that excludes rather than includes. The "paper student," as shown by his transcript, is poorly described. No account is taken, for instance, of his family background--low income, lack of occupational status and geographic or social mobility, indifference to or scorn of higher education. His self-image is average; he is economically, politically, and morally conservative; he lacks intellectual or social self-confidence; he aspires only to a middle occupation, and even that without settled goal. He must be guided toward compatibility of education and vocation and helped to develop self-acceptance, emotional balance, and maturity. His search for respect includes academic, social, and vocational success at his own level, free of parental restraint. The punch-card processing of students in "the system" discourages all these developments. Adjustment problems are frequently less severe for students in college residence than for those living at home, where normal emancipation conflicts with family values, and where the nightly return to a non-supportive environment negates much of his growth. Institutional rigidity (grades, attendance) may also stifle his search for self-determination. The college can offset these influences by broadening admission criteria, by relating programs more closely to daily life (as opposed to vocation), by defining and following educational objectives that meet modern expectations of individual development. (HH)

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"STUDENT NEEDS AND THE SYSTEM"

Presented To

NORTHEAST AREA TWO-YEAR COLLEGE READING ASSOCIATION

November 13, 1968

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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President

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JC 690 007

"STUDENT NEEDS AND THE SYSTEM"

"Modern man is not convinced that he is sick. He strides about the globe in scientific splendor, matter in one hand, energy in the other, proclaiming his conquest of the elements. But once back from the campaign, he hasn't the faintest idea of what to do with all his technological plunder."

Van Cleve Morris
Existentialism and the Education of Twentieth Century Man

About a decade ago, the public's attention moved education in the United States from the wings to the center of the stage. The American people were rudely jolted out of their complacency when they suddenly found themselves in second place in a small segment of scientific endeavor, the space race. Reactions were predictably American, ranging from thoughtful to completely irresponsible attacks upon what is euphemistically called "the educational establishment". Amid this loud and sometimes acrimonious debate, educators and laymen alike scrambled into print to paint pictures of imminent disaster and to present simplistic solutions to the perceived weaknesses of our educational system.

As one would expect, after an initial quivering, the pendulum made a majestic swing to an over-emphasis upon the physical sciences, mathematics, and engineering; and a later counter swing, largely generated by university students, toward a more humanistic and rational balance among the various subject matter disciplines. Simultaneously, higher education grew geometrically in both size and complexity, thus further complicating the problems faced by all institutions of higher education.

Perhaps the most significant of all developments within the last five years has been the highly articulate protest of college students against both the system and the technology of higher education in this country. These fundamental challenges to colleges as they are presently constituted will hopefully lead to reforms which will make higher education, the foster-child of science and technology, an instrument of service to youth and adults rather than a sophisticated obstacle course whose operation seems aimed at exclusion rather than inclusion.

Although tempted, I have resisted the impulse to paraphrase my remarks with a sentence or two about the current crisis in education. Having read countless articles in educational journals over the last twenty-five years which began with the phrase, "The current crisis in education....", I have assiduously avoided this cliche. If history

runs true to form, the implementation of the necessary reforms in education will take place not in the shrill dialogue of the street demonstration or the confrontation on the steps of "Old Main", but in the relatively quiet councils of trustees, faculty, administrators, and thoughtful and rational students.

It is my purpose this evening to concentrate upon my perception of community college students and their needs, and to suggest some modest reforms in our multivariant system of higher education which might bring the teaching-learning process into closer juxtaposition with the realities of the latter half of the Twentieth Century.

The Paper Student

Faculty members regardless of their area of specialization are familiar with the "paper student". This is the person whose name appears on the high school and college transcript, and whose name, verbal and numerical test scores, and socioeconomic data is pumped out of the computer for all to see. His substance consists of holes in a card, or electronic impressions on a computer disc. He is a symbolic person made up of static and quite unreliable bits of information which purport to describe him and to predict his probable behavior in an academic social setting. What does the two-year college paper student look like?

The most definitive review of research on the junior college student is the publication of K. Patricia Cross, The Junior College Student: A Research Description. Her synthesis and analysis of the literature provides useful but limited information about the students with whom we must work.

It is essential that we observe the caution that the results of all of the research studies apply to groups, that there are individuals on both ends of the distributions as well as many near the means and medians. Thus the picture we now paint is of a general pattern of characteristics which cannot and should not be applied to an individual.

As Cross points out, most substantive research on junior college students has been done since 1964.

In very brief terms, we can summarize the characteristics of junior college students in relation to a number of items. The first characteristic, which is always of primary interest to educators, is that students in these colleges are generally of average or below average academic ability as demonstrated by test scores and high school transcripts. While students entering four-year institutions tend to cluster at the top of the scale, there is a relatively even distribution of academic abilities among junior college students.

Socioeconomic differences are even more striking. Two-year college students in public institutions tend to come from families in which the fathers and mothers had no collegiate experience. Family incomes tend to be significantly lower than those of students entering four-year institutions, and a relatively small percentage of these students' fathers are part of the professional and managerial class. As one would expect, stimulation by parents to enter college is less powerful than that found in the families of students who attend four-year colleges. Students entering community colleges show a pattern of less geographic mobility than others.

In the American Council on Education study (Astin et al, 1967), a probe was made of students' attitudes about themselves. A majority of junior college students appear to see themselves as of average ability academically, athletically, and in relation to other qualities. They tend to be conservative in relation to political and economic questions; to have a low level of self-confidence both intellectually and socially; and to cling more rigidly to middle class mores than college and university students. Two-year college students tend to be somewhat more interested in choice of a career, accumulation of material wealth, and marriage and family living.

Their educational and occupational interests are, as one would expect, focused upon collegiate work below the master's degree and in the middle occupations rather than the professional and managerial

fields. Their current attitudes toward a particular vocational choice are somewhat unsettled, their being less sure of themselves than their counterparts on other campuses.

Individual Needs and Developmental Tasks

Those young men and women and adults who sit across from us in our counseling offices or in our classrooms have only a tenuous resemblance to the paper student described above. They come to us bringing with them every describable type of attitude, personality type, motivation, and ability. Those who have recently graduated from high school tend to be naive, idealistic, and with a tinge of cynicism engendered by a relatively rigid public school experience.

As responsible adults and educators, it seems to me that our most important responsibility is to try to individualize the college experience to the greatest possible degree. Perhaps the framework I am suggesting below will move us toward this goal.

We can look at each individual as having needs which are satisfied by the successful completion of developmental tasks. While we may discuss these needs and tasks separately, they are obviously not mutually exclusive, and it is essential that we think of the individual and the process of education in holistic terms.

The first need that all students have, regardless of age, is vocational competence. In our society with its puritan tradition, constructive work for the production of either goods or services is

an imperative for all. In our scientific society the individual can achieve vocational competence through academic success. I am sure you are all aware that achieving recognized credentials in a post-high school institution opens the door to opportunities not otherwise available. If vocational competence is to be achieved, the student must have relevant occupational preparation of a superior quality. This is especially true in professional and managerial positions, as well as the emerging semi-professions and technical occupations in both manufacturing and service industries, and government. The necessity for appropriate occupational preparation is most clearly demonstrated in the civil service structure of local, state, and national government which currently employs a large segment of the labor force and which recognizes further education as an important criterian for promotion.

One of the most difficult jobs a young person faces is identifying and making progress toward interlocked educational and vocational goals. The horizontal transfer of large numbers of students from program to program and from institution to institution is a clear indication that a majority of college students are neither ready nor able to relate themselves to a specific area of study and the occupation toward which such study would lead them.

A second major task is the completion of the process of emotional adjustment as an adult. This implies that a student must

develop self-acceptance as to sex, level of intellectual ability, and general emotional balance, and must develop a balance between extreme behavior patterns. Since our students come from virtually all strata of society, they represent the widest possible variation of early childhood experiences, many of which inhibit the development of well-adjusted, mature personalities. Perhaps this need accounts for more academic failure than any other factor.

All of us need to be accepted and respected by others. In sociological terms this means that we need status and a defined role within our peer group. In order to fulfill this need the student is required to be successful academically, competent in his social relationships, and moving toward a vocational goal identified as acceptable by the peer group and the community. It is within this need that students in community colleges tend to be unrealistic. All of us have encountered many students who articulate ambitions to be scientists, physicians, attorneys, and other high status occupations, while they simultaneously lack the requisite intellectual ability and necessary level of motivation. The lack of realism in the identification of educational and occupational goals by students can be attributed to a great extent to the need for acceptance and status from peers and adults alike.

Each individual has a fundamental need to have a personal identity which, at least in his perception of himself, is clearly

distinct and unique as compared to all others whom he knows. Adolescents and young adults attempt to satisfy these needs by developing an acceptable self-concept which requires independence from parental restraints. A personal identity also depends upon a pattern of successful experiences in and out of school which in turn generates self-confidence and in a circular motion, greater personal identity and individuality. Much of the current protest among college students grows out of this need. The rejection of the punch card process and its result, the "manufacturing" of people in an impersonal and complex "system", has generated a reaction in which many students deliberately defy the most sensitive conventions of society.

Last, and equally important, is the need for love and affection. This need, like the others, is universal and is only possible when an individual is mature and well-adjusted enough to accept himself. As the student moves from adolescence to maturity he must learn that satisfying emotional relationships with others require a self-sacrificing role substantially different than that of the immediate gratification pattern of the small child. Many students with whom we must work suffer from the lack of adequate adult models in relation to love and affection. This disability can play havoc with every aspect of their lives.

Some Inhibitions of the Learning Process

Students attending residential two-year colleges have the same problems of adjustment and emancipation from the home as are faced by all young people who leave parents, siblings, and home at this age. College freshmen have a special need for strong psychological support as they get their first experience in facing the rigorous and unbending requirements of higher education. The student who remains at home however, almost regardless of social class, faces an additional problem. Students living at home with parents while going through the process of emancipation oftentimes generate conflicts because the young person's values and mores change with the college experience. His parents' value structure remains the same. Thus if a student returns home and discusses social, political, economic, and other ideas commonly accepted on the campus but which are outside the general framework of middle class values, there may be serious difficulties between parents and children. The period of adolescence has been extended quite substantially by our society, and it can be extended even further by parental domination through the junior college years.

The student from a lower middle class or deprived family has the additional disadvantage of having to return to an unsatisfactory home and neighborhood each night. Here he finds the same conflicts and problems with which he has had to cope since his earliest memory.

Here he finds an environment which at best is non-supportive and at the worst is hostile to the idea of college attendance. Lacking adequate physical facilities for study and without encouragement from parents and friends, he is a high risk student. He lacks the support of a family tradition of education and may, in certain instances, by attending college be frustrating the family's expectations for immediate economic contributions to its needs as a group.

The student also faces the possibility of divided loyalties between the community and the campus. He may feel a conflict of identification: is he a college student or not? is he really loyal to his high school or are his loyalties directed toward the campus of which he is now a part? This conflict also reaches into his comparisons with fellow students in four-year institutions: is he as active socially and politically as university students? Although community college students tend to be conservative, there is a substantial miniority who are interested in and sympathetic with the radical student movement.

Institutional rigidity found among faculty, counselors, and administrators presents another set of problems for the student. Such rigidity is demonstrated in our obsessive reliance upon grades, required class attendance, and our general tendency to enforce conformity to middle class standards. Unfortunately, many students

find that a collegiate experience is merely more of the same and, in many instances, presented to them in ways which are less effective than those they encountered in the secondary schools. Our own compulsiveness forces students into patterns of behavior which are anything but rewarding and self-satisfying to his needs at this particular point in time.

In sum, it should be clear that the counselor and teacher is dealing with a total human being, and that however we might divide the tasks for which we are responsible, we must eventually return to a holistic view of both individual and educational process. With respect to two-year college students, particularly those in the non-residential public institution, there are special circumstances with which we must deal.

Suggested Institutional Responses

I would like to suggest some institutional responses related to the foregoing concepts of students' needs and aimed at remediation as an essential part of the educational process. We are faced with a system which is persistently preoccupied with its own traditions. This organizational rigidity is demonstrated by admissions policies designed to exclude large numbers of students rather than to find effective and meaningful ways to include students who vary from our predetermined and often indefensible criteria for admission. The

basis for selection of students to attend college, which is based upon numerical and verbal abilities measured by standardized tests and transcripts of traditional high school curricula, is another symptom of our obsession with an orderly and largely irrelevant "system". Judson Jerome in the November 1, 1968 issue of LIFE, put his finger on the problem when he said,

> "Most of us recognize that we might have been better educated; but do we recognize that we might have improved our education not by pursuing more of the same but by going about learning in completely different ways? For example, why have we not resented--and changed--education conducted almost without reference to politics, religion, sex, personal ethics, family relationships--without reference, in short, to the areas of experience which matter as one prepares for citizenship, parenthood or any other role outside the school? How many of us truly feel that our college education was relevant to real human concerns? How many of us, especially in graduate study, have let a model of scholarship be foisted upon us which took us farther from, rather than nearer to, our interests in our subject? How many of us have let education exorcize our enthusiasm and quell our will to action?"

Many of us cling tenaciously to the idea that higher education is for the elite and consequently must retain requirements and procedures since outmoded by the realities of our society. We must recognize that elementary, secondary, and higher education now constitute virtually the only means to achieving all that is important to individuals in our society: notably, economic power, social status, and group recognition and acceptance of the individual.

If this is truly a fact, the system must be open to all who can profit from it. The system must be changed so that the teaching methods, curricular content, and educational objectives are realistically related to the individual's needs today and his subsequent development as a human being tomorrow.

High on the list of priorities for changes is the shift in our concept of courses and curriculum from educational objectives that are currently poorly defined or non-existent, to objectives that are explicitly stated and supported by a systematically developed sequence of developmental tasks. The primary function of education is to change behavior in both the short and long run. The concept of the developmental task, as an integral unit in a course, has been accepted in a few subject matter disciplines but has been least effectively handled in the humanities and the social sciences. If this concept is to be implemented in all disciplines, explicit definitions and objectives are essential to incure that the curriculum is related to society's expectations of the individual both at this point in time and in the future.

Another imperative in changing higher education and learning is the need to utilize new teaching methods. One which offers great promise is the simulation technique in which the process being learned can be imbedded in a realistic setting. A second technique is

"gaming"; a method used currently in courses in business administration. An example of this method is the "Super Market Game". This game entails the formation of groups of four or five students who serve as officers of different super market corporations. They then compete with each other in purchasing, marketing, accounting, and the other kinds of activities which take place in an operating corporate situation. The corporation may make a great deal of money, be moderately successful, or even go bankrupt, and its success or failure depends upon the performance of the students who make up the group.

If one accepts the idea that the students who will be attending community colleges are not from the upper middle class but the middle and lower middle classes, one must also accept the implication that many of these students will come to the college with serious personality and academic deficiencies. The traditional classroom approach to these students is simply not adequate to meet their needs. Rather, we should formulate the teaching-learning process for these students as a clinical procedure in which we deal not only with verbal and numerical skills, but in which we also attempt remediation in relation to personality conflicts, attitudes, and motivations. Here, I am attempting to make clear that as fifty, sixty, or seventy-five percent of all high school graduates attend some type of institution

of higher education, we will be forced to deal with an increasing proportion of students with unique problems who were not a part of the campus scene in the past.

Perhaps one of the most serious limitations of community colleges is their unwillingness or inability to utilize the student peer culture as part of the educational process. While it is certainly true that student activities programs have, as one of their central purposes, the utilization of student culture as an educational tool, I think most of us would agree that this effort suffers from serious limitations in outcome. Student activity programs have generally received short shrift as to financial support as well as acceptance by academicians. The compartmentalization of colleges into mutually exclusive cells of curriculum, course work, grades, and classroom teaching, and of student activities as a separate and unrelated entity has inhibited if not excluded the possibility of using these parts of the environment as mutually supporting learning opportunities.

Studies of two-year college students imply over and over that these students need the support of their peer culture to a greater extent than we realize. Institutional arrangements can and should be made for a systematic and well organized tutorial system for students needing academic help. Students should also be responsible for maintaining effective communication among

administrators, faculty, and students; and the orientation and adjustment of freshmen to the campus should be a major student responsibility.

Last, and perhaps most important, are the relationships of the individual faculty members to the students being served. Most adolescents have a strong need for adequate adult models. They are in the process of psychologically rejecting their parents and, in most instances, peer culture support alone is not enough. The faculty member must, in my opinion, reorient his self-concepts from being a purveyor of facts and information to seeing himself as a partner in the learning process. If his self-concept changes in this way, the faculty member will himself institute some of the changes I have suggested above. On the other hand, if teaching faculty and counselors continue along traditional lines in their relationships with students, we will continue to see an inordinately high student attrition rate which may be accepted by the institution, but which will ultimately frustrate the goals for which society organized two-year colleges.

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